



(U.S. Army photo)

Building Baghdad one board at a time!

Soldiers from 510th Sapper Company, 20th Engineer Battalion, of Fort Hood, Texas, lift part of a building frame for a building in Iraq. (See story page 3)

New plan for greater security

By Sgt. Mike Pryor
2-82 Abn. Public Affairs

BAGHDAD - Coalition and Iraqi security forces are moving towards a solution for the conflict in Iraq, bringing new ideas and areas into the ongoing operation to secure Baghdad.

Sadr City, formerly perceived as a stronghold for radical cleric Moqtada Al Sadr's militia is being included in negotiations through efforts on all sides.

Commanders from the Iraqi Army, Iraqi Police, and 2nd Brigade Combat, 82nd Airborne

Division met with a civic leader of Sadr City, Raheem Al Darraji, on March 1 in order to discuss upcoming security plans for Sadr City and the infusion of national level Iraqi security forces. The meeting took place at a police station in Sadr City that will soon become the area's first Joint Security Station, manned 24 hours-a-day by all elements of the security forces including U.S. forces.

"It was a very positive meeting," said Col. Don Farris of Lone Star, Texas, commander of the 82nd Airborne Division's 2nd Brigade Combat Team based out of Fort Bragg, N.C.,

"They've shown they are willing to reach out to the government of Iraq and coalition forces."

The 2nd Brigade Combat Team of the 82nd Airborne Division is the first of several BCTs that will flow into Baghdad in the coming months as part of the troop surge to combat sectarian violence. They are already having an impact in the key area of

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Coalition, Iraqi security forces meet in Sadr City

Security

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Sadr City.

Farris' unit has been establishing small bases called combat outposts on the edges of Sadr City since early last month, positioning themselves for a significantly increased presence in the densely populated six square mile area.

That move, which at one time would have been politically unthinkable for the Iraqi government, is now becoming a reality.

This time rather than barricade them off, it appears that leaders in Sadr City are ready to work with coalition forces when they come.

Weary of a cycle of violence and militia activities, as well as al-Qaeda attacks in the area, Mr. Raheem Al Darraji stressed again and again during the meeting that he welcomed the presence of Iraqi and U.S. forces, and the help they could provide his people.

"We want you here sooner, rather than later," Al Darraji said.

Initial reports indicate the overall Baghdad Security Plan - which has placed thousands of additional troops on the



(Photo by Sgt. Mike Pryor 2-82 Abn. Public Affairs)

Col. Billy Farris, commander of the 82nd Abn. Div. 2nd BCT, meets with Raheem Al Darraji, the civic leader of Sadr City, to discuss the establishment of the area's first joint security station March 1.

streets of the Iraqi capital - has achieved reduced levels of violence thus far.

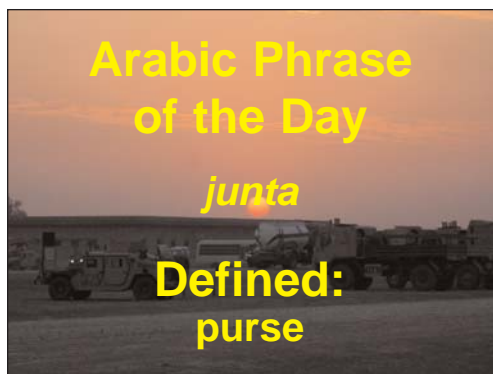
Maj. Gen. Abdul Kareem, commander of the 8th Brigade, 2nd Iraqi National Police Division, a joint partner said there is no reason why the successes of the security plan in other parts of Baghdad can't be replicated in Sadr City.




"We will do the same as we did in

Adhamiyah. It is one nation and no one is above the law," Kareem said.

Farris also stressed that point. The Iraqi Government and its coalition partners have the authority to go after criminals, extremists, and insurgents wherever they are located.

"There are no sanctuaries, anywhere," Farris said.



| Iraq 3-Day Weather Report |  |  |  |
|------------------------------------|--|---|---|
| | Today | Tomorrow | Wednesday |
| High: 81 Low: 55 | High: 75 Low: 55 | High: 72 Low: 50 | |

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(U.S. Army photo)

Soldiers from 510th Sapper Company, 20th Engineer Battalion, work on constructing a building in the Baghdad area.

Combat engineers build up Baghdad

**By 1st Lt. Kevin Thomas
510-20 Engineer Battalion**

BAGHDAD -As Soldiers stand up security stations and patrol bases across the Iraqi capital the need for operational buildings increases. This is where the 510th Sapper Company, 20th Engineer Battalion, of Fort Hood, Texas, comes into play.

The unit repairs damaged Iraqi infrastructure, and performs construction in support of U.S. forces, improving the quality of life on remote bases for U.S and Iraqi Army Soldiers.

After being in country less than a week, Soldiers in 3rd Platoon, 510th Sapper Company were tasked to take on their first project to complete a 4,000 square foot battalion tactical operations center and the building of a 4,200 square foot company tactical operation center for Task Force 4-31 Infantry, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division out of Fort Drum, New York.

The completion of the battalion and company TOCs allowed each staff section and company operations to move out of the 20-foot shipping containers and give them a larger work area with all the amenities that they need to have a successful operations center.

The brunt of the responsibilities, however, fell upon the team leaders, most of whom had carpentry jobs prior to joining the military. They were given a task based upon their experience, and assumed control of four to seven

Soldiers.

"This project was a great opportunity to allow junior enlisted to further develop necessary leadership skills," said Sgt. Rick Greene, team leader with 3rd Platoon. "Throughout the project, we gave some of our junior enlisted, who had prior carpentry experience before coming into the military, an assigned task and they took charge of it and completed the job with exceptional results."

Within two weeks, the battalion operation center was complete and ready to hand over to Task Force 4-31 Infantry, and 3rd Platoon continued to work steadily to finish the company building.

Three crews started framing the interior and exterior walls as one crew came behind them and nailed them into place. After the framing of the walls was complete, the arduous task of installing the rafters soon came upon them.

One week later, the rafters were erected and put on top of the frame in order to install the roof and ceiling.

"By doing these types of missions you can tell the difference that you are making for the units that operate out of these smaller patrol bases," said Pfc. Glenn Taylor, a Soldier with 3rd Platoon.

"I had no prior construction experience coming into this project, but I was excited to take on this task and see what I could make of it," he said.

Baghdad in Brief

Coalition, Iraqi forces begin clearing operations in Sadr City

BAGHDAD - More than 600 Multi-National Division - Baghdad Soldiers and 550 Iraqi security forces began a clearing operation in the eastern district known as Sadr City March 4.

Soldiers from 2nd Battalion, 325th Airborne Infantry Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division, with two Stryker companies from 1st Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division, conducted a combined clearing operation beginning in the early morning hours March 4, teaming up with the 8th Brigade, 2nd Iraqi National Police Division and the 3d Battalion, 2nd Brigade, 10th Iraqi Army Division.

"During operations today, local residents were receptive and cooperative with coalition and Iraqi forces," said Lt. Col. Scott R. Bleichwehl, MND-B spokesman. "The operation is designed to set secure conditions for the citizens of Sadr City."

During the operation March 4, Bleichwehl said no weapons caches were reported or suspects detained. He added there were no incidents of violence, and no casualties to coalition forces, Iraqi security forces or civilians.



"Avengers" are the 'pit crew' for aviators

By Capt. Guyton Robinson
1st ACB

CAMP TAJI, Iraq - The 1st Air Cavalry Brigade's, "Avengers" maintenance team helps the "Warrior Brigade" set the standard for aviation maintenance at the company level.

Soldiers of Company A, 1st Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, 1st ACB, 1st Cavalry Division, have led their brigade in Apache flight hours for an individual company every month of the deployment to date - largely because of their proactive maintenance program and pursuit of accomplishing major inspections and repairs at the unit level.

"We believe in [being proactive]; that's pretty much getting anything done that we're able to, so it won't bite us on the butt later on. It helps us keep these aircraft ready to go at any given time," said Houston native Sgt. Yadder Mejia, an AH-64D Apache crew chief for Co. A.

The mechanics take pride in the fact that they are referred to as pit crews by their supervisors. Their goal is to turn their aircraft around as quickly as possible to get it back into the air so that it can contribute to the



(Photos by Spc. Nathan Hoskins 1st ACB Public Affairs)

Spc. Benjamin Davis (left) and Spc. Adrian Heredia (right), both AH-64D Apache crew chiefs for Co. A, 1st Bn., 227th Avn. Regt., 1st ACB, 1st Cav. Div., inspect the rotor head of an Apache.

overall mission.

"The first time I heard us compared to a NASCAR pit crew was by Lt. Col. [Christopher] Walach [1st Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment commander] because he sees how we work as a team. We each have our own roll and we know exactly what has to be done," said Mejia.

Still, there are some major differences between a pit crew at race car event and the "Avengers," said San Diego native Spc. Benjamin Davis an Apache crew chief for A Co.

"NASCAR pit crews work for the paycheck and T.V. - we work for something a lot larger than that. We work to get the aircraft up to save lives. It's not about the big paycheck ...," he said.

The maintenance team strives to return aircraft to fully mission capable status in as little time as possible by eliminating minor problems that can add up. As a result, Company A was the first company in the 1st ACB to complete a 125-hour inspection - a scheduled, major maintenance event at the line-company level.

"What we try to do is we try to eliminate the small things when we do an inspection like getting everything coordinated and parts ready before we do the inspection. These are the small things that help us get aircraft fully mission capable a little more quickly," said Spc. Dustin Wybrant, a crew with Co. A.

The "Avenger's" whole operation from start to finish is organized to prevent needless

trips to various shops which slow down the overall speed of the task. The company has increased their performance on the 125-hour inspections from eight hours down to nearly half that time at four hours and 30 minutes.

Although completing tasks are extremely important, the ultimate end goal of the Apache is what some of the Co. A crew chiefs find most important.

"To me, a successful day is when the birds go out there...and save our guys on the ground," said Wybrant.

The Avengers owe their success in the maintenance arena to their mentor, Chief Warrant Officer 4 Keith Yoakum, a maintenance test pilot and fellow Avenger who died in combat Feb. 2, protecting his wing men, said Wybrant.

"We try to carry on Mr. Yoakum's legacy by always pushing ourselves harder. He was a man that always wanted us to do better because he knew that we could," said Mejia.

"Mr. Yoakum was the hardest working person I've ever seen. When you have someone working harder than the lowest private out there on the flight line - as a CW4 - it tells you a lot about that person. We just try to work harder everyday because we know that's what he would want," said Waybrant.

The Co. A Soldiers intend to honor CW4 Yoakum's memory by achieving the company's mission of providing mission ready aircraft over the skies of Baghdad to support coalition operations throughout the unit's deployment.



Spc. Dustin Wybrant, an AH-64D Apache crew chief for Co. A, 1st Bn., 227th Avn. Regt., 1st ACB, 1st Cav. Div., vacuums out an Apache.

Troop keeps soldiering after 21 years

By Sgt. Nicole Kojetin
1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

CAMP LIBERTY, Iraq - Few children know exactly what they want to be when they grow up. Often the childhood fantasies revolve around being a cowboy, astronaut or being president.

But newly-promoted Sgt. Maj. Clarence Miller Jr., knew exactly what he wanted to be... a Soldier.

"Since probably the sixth grade, I knew that I was going into the military," the Pensacola, Fla., native said.

"I would see relatives in the military who always seemed to have it together and have direction in their lives," Miller said. "It never seemed like they were scraping pennies like other people back home. It inspired me."

From the beginning, he knew what field he wanted to go into. Although the family members who were in the military were in the Army, he wasn't sold

on which branch in the military to go into. His choice of a job made the choice for him.

"I went to the Marine Corps first and requested communications," Miller said. "They told me that my job was to be a fighter first, and they would make the choice of what job I would have."

The Army, on the other hand, had given him his choice. In 1984, a month and a half after graduating high school, he left for the basic training. As far as he was concerned, it was the only option.

"I was from a small town and neither one of my parents had much of an education," Miller said.

"My father's father died when he was about eight, and he was the oldest. He quit school to help the family. My mother quit school in 11th grade. They were just proud of me for graduating from high school. They never expected me to go to college. In fact, it was never really men-

tioned to me.

"So, I never really had any intention to go to college. I really just wanted to be a Soldier," he added.

When his childhood dreams finally came true, it wasn't quite bliss. He said his mom wasn't keen on him being away. Since the beginning, she had a hard time letting go of her son and pressured him to come home.

After his mother had some health problems, including open-heart surgery, Miller made the hard decision to get out of the military.

"I have strong family ties," he said. "She needed me."

It didn't last long, although he felt he was needed at home, his family understood that his heart was still with the Army.

"I love the institution and taking care of Soldiers," he said. "It gives me the chance to counsel people without being a psychologist and I truly enjoy it. From the beginning, it was my intention to stay in and retire."

"My father sat me down and told me that I needed to start living for me and not for others," Miller said.

A year and a half after leaving active duty, with his family and God on his side, he was back in the military.

It is a good thing he did, too. He met his bride, Alcer, in the Army, and they have now been married for 12 years. They have two sons.

"Beside's my mom, she is my biggest fan," he said. "Whenever I get the smallest bit tired, she motivates me to keep going."

The bond with his family helps him through hardships and he loves spending time with them.

"I could spend 10 hours just sitting and talking to my wife, not

really doing anything," he said.

He looks forward from getting back from this deployment do just that, along with a little fishing. According to him, Z-Lake, the manmade lake which serves as a borderline between Liberty and Camp Victory, just doesn't cut it. Plus, he doesn't have much free time in Iraq.

His job as the radio non-commissioned officer-in-charge for the Multi-National Division - Baghdad headquarters keeps him on his toes. He is also very active at church, singing in the choir and learning as much as he can about his religion.

Also, his views on college have changed drastically since he was a teenager, and is currently taking classes.

"I realized that education is the key, that even though I am a Soldier, I needed to better myself through civilian education," Miller said. He has made great strides in that direction.

Miller currently has an associate's degree in liberal arts with the University of Maryland, a Bachelor's of Science with a concentration in management, and is six courses away from a Master of Business Administration degree with a concentration in military operations.

He is planning on using what he has learned to educate others when he retires.

Miller is looking into the Troops to Teacher's Program or possibly teaching college courses, maybe history or humanities.

He still has a few good years left in the Army, though.

He's planning on enjoying them until it is time for him to move aside for another Soldier to take his place.

When will that be? Only time can tell.



(Photo by Sgt. Nicole Kojetin, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs)

Sgt. Maj. Clarence Miller Jr., receives his new rank from Brig. Gen. Vincent Brooks, the Multi-National Division - Baghdad deputy commanding general - support March 3 on Camp Liberty, Iraq.